

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2585

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 0311

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OREP (WOLFF, LESTER L.)

SUBJECT: CODEL WOLFF: PRESS REPORTS OF STATEMENTS IN U.S.

1. LA NACION, SAN JOSE'S LEADING NEWSPAPER TODAY (JANUARY 21) CARRIED AN APPARENTLY EXCLUSIVE STORY DATED WASHINGTON, JANUARY 20, BY CORRESPONDENT ARMANDO VARGAS, ON THE CODEL VISIT TO FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. STORY ALLEGEDLY BASED ON INTERVIEW WITH CONGRESSMAN WOLFF AND ON A JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED BY HIM AND CONGRESSMAN GILMAN. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW:

2. "COSTA RICA WAS IDENTIFIED TODAY IN THE CONGRESS AS ONE OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL TRANSIT POINTS IN THE ILLEGAL TRAFFIC OF COCAINE BETWEEN SOUTH AMERICAN AND THE UNITED STATES."

3. QUOTING CONGRESSMAN WOLFF: "THERE ARE 750 LANDING STRIPS IN YOUR COUNTRY AND THE CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC COASTS ARE VIRTUALLY UNPROTECTED". (NOTE: CODEL WAS INFORMED HERE THAT THERE ARE SOME 230 SMALL LANDING STRIPS WHICH ARE UNCONTROLLED, NOT 750).

4. "WOLFF REPORTED THAT HE MET WITH PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER, REACHING AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE FOR THE

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ESTABLISHMENT OF A BINATIONAL WORKING GROUP TO CONTROL

THE ILLEGAL TRAFFIC OF DRUGS". (NOTE: ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT WORKING GROUP IN COSTA RICA WAS NEVER DISCUSSED. CODEL DID INFORM GOCR AUTHORITIES OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A GROUP IN MEXICO).

5. "WOLFF AND GILMAN COULD NOT MEET, AS THEY HAD PLANNED, WITH ROBERT L. VESCO, WHOSE SUPPOSED CONNECTION WITH THE ILLEGAL TRAFFIC IN DRUGS IS BEING INVESTIGATED BY A FEDERAL GRAND JURY IN DETROIT". (NOTE: CODEL NEVER EXPRESSED TO US INTEREST IN MEETING VESCO).

6. QUOTING CONGRESSMAN WOLFF: "PRESIDENT ODUBER SHOWED HIMSELF VERY OPEN IN HIS CONSIDERATION OF THE PROBLEM." END DIRECT QUOTE. ARTICLE THEN CONTINUES, "ODUBER WAS NOT, HOWEVER, VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE EXTENT OF THE UTILIZATION OF COSTA RICA AS A TRANSIT POINT IN THE COCAINE TRAFFIC."

7. STORY GOES ON TO DESCRIBE EXTENLUOF DRUG PROBLEM IN U.S. AND THE OTHER COUNTRIES VISITED. IT THEN QUOTES WOLFF AND GILMAN JOINT STATEMENT AS SAYING "IN ALL THE COUNTRIES, OFFICIALS COMPLAINED OF THE SLIGHT COLLABORATION WHICH THEY ARE RECEIVING FROM PERSONNEL OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE UNITED STATES DBIN THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS." (NOTE: IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE "OFFICIALS" REFERRED TO ARE U.S.--I.E. DEA--OR HOST GOVERNMENT. IN EITHER CASE, NO SUCH COMPALINT WAS VOICED IN CODEL'S OFFICIAL VISITS HERE. TO THE CONTRARY, MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY CHARPENTIER SPECIFICALLY PRAISED COOPERATION BY EMBASSY AND DEA AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR ASSISTANCE GIVEN. HE DID, OF COURSE, SAY THAT MORE INTERNAL HELP WOULD BE WELCOME AND USEFUL. SEE SAN JOSE 0289.)

8. "WITHOUT MENTIONING COSTA RICA SPECIFICALLY, WOLFF AND GILMAN SAID THAT THEY ARE "PROFOUNDLY PREOCCUPIED BY THE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE TRAFFIC OF DRUGS ENJOY POLITICAL PROTECTION AT A HIGH LEVEL."

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9. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE PASS SUBSTANCE OF ABOVE TO CONGRESSMAN WOLFF. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTS THAT IN ANY COMMUNICATION HE MAY BE SENDING TO PRESIDENT ODUBER, THE CONGRESSMAN CLARIFY THE PRESS REPORT WHICH IS PROBABLY INACCURATE IN SEVERAL RESPECTS (SEE ABOVE) AND WHICH CERTAINLY WILTHNOT BE HELPFUL HERE. TODMAN

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